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## NOTES ON MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT.

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### AMERICAN CITIES.

**New York.**—*The Greater New York Charter.*\* The proposed charter for the Greater New York overshadows, for the time being, all other municipal matters. The manner in which the charter has been prepared is typical of the off-hand methods which prevail in the preparation and the enactment of our legislation, both state and national. The commission, appointed under an act of the legislature of 1896, to report to the legislature of 1897 a charter for the Greater New York was appointed June 9, 1896. In the early summer a few meetings were held and certain general propositions were adopted, but no comprehensive plan or framework was formulated. During the summer one member of the commission prepared with great industry a draft of a charter. This was reported to the commission's committee on draft on September 21. After that date the draft committee met from time to time, and at length, on December 9, reported a complete draft to the commission.

The first eight chapters of this draft were made public by the commission on December 24, with the announcement that public hearings would begin on January 2, and would continue for two weeks. During those two weeks, additional chapters were given out from time to time, as they were completed by the different lawyers to whom they had been referred. One or two important chapters have not yet been made public, and no information has been given out regarding the supplemental bills which may be of the first importance.

A recital of the details would show that the charter, as it has been promulgated by the commission, bears upon its face abundant evidence of the fact that it is largely the work of many different persons, each of whom has drafted some part, with little or no knowledge of the methods pursued by the others. These parts had been put together without adequate revision and with no thorough attempt to harmonize them. The result is not a unified instrument. This was inevitable; the time at the disposal of the commission was insufficient. This criticism must not, therefore, be taken as any reflection upon the industry or the ability of the commission.

The draft contains many provisions which are in their essence of a character to be covered by general, rather than by special laws.

\*Communication of James W. Pryor, Esq., Secretary of the City Club.

Thus, Section 10 of Chapter V contains detailed provisions as to civil service examinations. Many pages of the charter are filled with provisions of this character. The result would be to render it much more difficult to know and to apply the law, and to increase the great confusion and uncertainty which characterize all our statute laws. On the other hand, many of the provisions in the charter are essentially in the nature of ordinances, and could readily be omitted. Why, for instance, is it necessary to cumber the charter with a special provision like the following, while many similar cases are left to be dealt with in ordinances to be passed by the municipal assembly?

"Every dealer in second-hand articles and scalper in coal freights shall pay for a license a sum to be determined by the Municipal Assembly, not exceeding five hundred dollars. Dealers in second-hand articles and scalpers in coal freights may be required to give security to the city with one or more sufficient surety or sureties, in a sum not exceeding ten thousand dollars conditioned for the observance of the ordinances of the Municipal Assembly."—*Cap. II., sec. 33.*

A large part of the charter might be wiped out with no other result than to make it shorter and clearer. This could be accomplished by substituting for special provisions a general provision so drawn as to cover all the cases in that class.

The 900 pages of the draft of charter do not by any means limit the size of the proposed charter of the Greater New York. The draft contains between fifteen and twenty pages re-enacting in general terms many classes of existing laws. These laws thus become part of the charter, and must be included in any estimate of the bulk of the proposed charter for the Greater New York. It will be found that upon this basis the charter of the city would be certainly more than 2000 pages in extent, and probably not less than 3000.

The first few sections of several chapters and of the titles of Chapter X relate to general powers and duties of heads of departments, appointment of deputies and other subordinates, the establishing of bureaus, etc. The failure to reduce these various special provisions to comprehensive general provisions covering all cases of the same class, leaves many unnecessary pages of sections presenting differences and inconsistencies similar to those in the provisions as to appointment and removal.

The idea of stimulating the citizens' civic spirit through the formal operation of the municipal government within fixed local divisions seems to enter into the provisions as to boroughs and districts of local improvements. But the expression of the idea is so confused and so complicated with details of administration that it will hardly be valuable as an incentive to intelligent civic pride. The citizen will still live in unrelated districts of the following kinds:—police precincts,

wards, school districts, fire districts, sewerage districts, street-cleaning districts and aldermanic districts; besides boroughs, local improvement districts, council districts, and several minor administrative divisions. It is believed that police precincts and wards are continued as separate divisions by implication only; but it can not be stated certainly that the draft charter does not continue them expressly, either in the chapters which have been issued or in those not yet before the public.

It is impossible to deal fully at this time with the numerous provisions giving officers or boards power to make "ordinances," "rules," "regulations," and "by-laws." All these terms are used without any attempt to define or distinguish them. Section 27 of Chapter II, giving to the municipal assembly general power to make ordinances, is far from clear. Section 31 of Chapter II, enumerates a large number of matters in which the assembly is given specific ordinance-making power. Scattered throughout the charter are several additional specific provisions of this nature, and about forty provisions giving to officers or boards power to make certain rules, regulations, or by-laws, many of which would be distinctly of the nature of ordinances. These provisions have little coherence one with another, and it may be said confidently that careful revision of the charter throughout upon this subject would do much to simplify and clarify the scheme as to this most important power.

What has been said will make it obvious that the absence of a coherent plan, together with the general obscurity of the details, makes criticism of the fundamental provisions of the charter a difficult matter. It cannot be safely undertaken without a more careful study of the charter as a whole, than has been possible under the conditions described. That serious defects exist in these provisions will appear from the fact that it is proposed to provide for a "bi-partisan" police board, and that the municipal assembly would consist of two chambers, all the members of which are to be elected biennially from comparatively small districts.

**Chicago.—Civil Service Reform.** The annual report of the Civil Service Commission gives an interesting account of the operation of the new civil service law. Although the commission recognizes that a number of amendments will be necessary, the fear of legislative tinkering is so great that they prefer to have the law remain in its present shape rather than risk a reconsideration of the whole system by the state legislature. During the short period of its operation the new law has done much to place the civil service upon a much higher plane. "The most marked effect," say the Commissioners, "has been in relieving the mayor and heads of departments from the pressure of

applicants for office, thus leaving them free to attend to their most important public duties." Furthermore, the system of political assessments which had completely demoralized the service, is rapidly becoming a thing of the past, owing to the emancipation of officers from the patronage and favor of politicians. But the greatest advantage which the new system offers is the far-reaching influence on the administration of law. This is especially noticeable in the enforcement of the tax laws. Heretofore the assessment of real and personal property has been greatly affected by the proximity of elections; assessments being used as a means of exerting political pressure upon the individual voters. The extension of the classified service to this department has greatly decreased, if not wholly eliminated, this abuse.

**Massachusetts.**—*Civil Service System.* The Thirteenth Annual Report of the Civil Service Commissioners of Massachusetts gives a summary of the work of the commission for the year ending December 4, 1896. With each year the civil service rules are being further extended in state and local administration. The most important extensions made during the present year went into effect February 15, 1897, and include in the classified service, messengers in city service, superintendents and assistant superintendents not specially exempted by statute, civil engineers, draftsmen and other employes of the city engineer, and the aids of the state fire-marshal. An important element in the work of the commission has been the organization and management of the labor service of various cities, which has been classified and administered under civil service rules in Boston, Cambridge, New Bedford, Newton and Everett. A system of registration of eligible, able-bodied laborers is adopted, from which the city departments requiring such labor are supplied. In Boston alone, some 3230 men were registered during the year; 108 requisitions from various city departments were received, and certifications of some 2365 names were made. The system has proven equally successful in the other cities.

A question of great interest to most of the cities of the United States has been the subject of much discussion during the year. It involved the constitutionality of the law which requires the certification and appointment to any position in the classified service of any veteran soldier or sailor, whether examined or not, in preference to any examined person, not a veteran, upon the eligible list. A petition for mandamus was filed by an applicant upon the eligible list for the detective division of the district police force. The petitioner wished to compel the commissioners to restore and keep his name at the head of the eligible list, in preference to an unexamined veteran also on the list. The whole question was exhaustively argued before the supreme

court. The decision upheld the position taken by the petitioner, but the court was careful not to pass upon the constitutionality of veteran preference legislation. The decision confined itself to the declaration that "the legislature could not compel an appointing officer to appoint to a public office persons of a certain class in preference to all others, *without the exercise of any discretion and without proper determination of qualification.*" The possibility of appointing veterans without examination at the *discretion of the appointing officer* was thus left in doubt. In order to finally settle the matter, the governor and council called for the opinion of the justices of the supreme court upon this question. The provision in the civil service rules permitting the appointment of veterans without examination at the discretion of the appointing officer, was unanimously held to be constitutional. Upon the question whether the legislature can direct that veterans *must* be preferred for public office, the court was divided, the majority recognizing the existence of such a power. As a result of these decisions, the commissioners have drawn the conclusion that while the legislature can provide that preference be given to veterans qualified for the position, "no law or rule can oblige the appointment to a public office or employment of a veteran not qualified for its duties."

**Boston.\*—*Municipal vs. Contract Work.*** Mayor Quincy has taken strong ground in favor of the direct performance of city work rather than by contract. In accordance with his representations, and as a result of a conference with representatives of the Typographical Union, the city council has voted to establish a Municipal Printing Office, in which, as soon as the necessary preparations can be made, all the printing of the city will hereafter be done. This will be the first municipal printing establishment in the United States. It is believed that a considerable economy will be effected by the city doing its own printing.

Another new municipal institution for direct work established by Mayor Quincy is the electrical construction division of the public buildings department, which does all the electrical construction, supply, and repairs for the municipal buildings at a great saving over previous methods. An expert electrician was appointed chief of the division. All materials required for electrical work are purchased at wholesale, at the lowest possible prices, and carried in stock, and an efficient corps, able to handle the different branches of electrical work, has been organized. One function of the division is to inspect the use of electric lights in the various city offices with a view to check waste of the current. It has been suggested that this may prove the

\*Communication of Sylvester Baxter, Esq.

forerunner of a general construction department, akin to the Works Department of the London County Council, which would undertake all the extensive constructive operations of the city, fully equipped for the purpose. In view of the prominence taken by labor-interests in the establishment of public baths, the mayor proposes that all the work on the new public bath to be erected by the city be done by union labor, as far as practicable.

In his annual message the mayor urged the policy of systematic, properly located and equipped playgrounds, so that no ward should be without some place where children could play and open-air sports be carried on. He held that it would be far wiser for the city to expend \$400,000 for public baths and playgrounds in the coming year than to devote that amount to any other purposes, of however pressing a character. "The adoption of progressive and distinctive municipal policies of this nature," he said, "tends to bring the city government closer to the people, and to promote a civic spirit which will yield valuable results in many directions."

The Merchants' Municipal Committee, the informal advisory body constituted by the mayor, and familiarly called "the Mayor's Cabinet," has been such a success that the mayor recommends the legal constitution of such a body as a permanent Board of Commerce and Finance, representative of the organized business men of the city, to act as an advisory body to the mayor, the city council, and the general court.

The mayor also recommends the establishment of a statistical department by the city, in charge of an unpaid commission. He points to the valuable results from such offices in Berlin, Paris, and other European cities. He says: "Such a department should supplement the work already done in the line of statistical inquiry by the governments of the United States and of the commonwealth, supervise and systematize such work of this character as is already undertaken by other departments of the city government, such as the board of health, and also pursue special lines of investigation of its own. Another important feature of its work should be the systematic collection and tabulation of comparative statistics of other municipalities. An annual publication giving an abstract in proper form of all current statistical information relating to the city, such as is published by some European cities, would also be of great utility. Financial comparisons of the cost of work done or service rendered in different years, or in different cities, would be valuable in disclosing waste or inefficiency. One member of such a commission should be a business man skilled in financial analysis, and the city engineer should be a member, ex-officio."

A strong effort is to be made in the present legislature to have the various city institutions for the insane, for paupers, for children and for criminals, placed respectively in the charge of separate boards of trustees for each class. All of these are at present under a single commissioner. Not only is the work too extensive and complicated for one official to handle, but radically different methods of administration are required for each. Hence it is believed that a more rational, scientific and humane system will be developed.

The mayor strongly recommends this measure. In this connection he warmly praises the work of the new advisory board on public institutions. This board was organized last August with twenty members, representing the following organizations: Associated Charities, Boston Provident Association, Children's Aid Society, Citizens' Association, Committee of Council and Co-operation, Massachusetts Prison Association, Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, Medico-Psychological Society, Merchants' Municipal Committee, Municipal League, Society of St. Vincent de Paul, Suffolk District Medical Society, Twentieth Century Club, United Hebrew Benevolent Association, and Young Ladies' Aid Society. The board was divided into four committees, of five members each, upon children's, insane, pauper, and penal institutions, respectively. Meetings of the whole board, at which the commissioner and the mayor together with the representatives of the institutions have been present, have been held once a month at City Hall, and formal reports, making valuable recommendations upon many important matters, have been presented from time to time by the different committees. The mayor holds that humanitarian management of the public institutions upon a scientific basis is not inconsistent with true economy. An important feature of the work of the year has been a thorough, scientific examination of the dietaries and cooking arrangements of the different institutions. The mayor expects that this investigation will be productive of excellent results, and possibly of some saving in the cost of subsistence. He says: "Modern chemistry is placing the whole matter of nutrition and cooking upon a scientific basis, and the city, which constantly feeds several thousand persons in its various institutions, should fully avail itself of the results of scientific inquiry in this field."

*Railway Subway.* The great subway, under construction by the city for the transfer of the street railway traffic from the surface underground through the congested district, has been leased to the West End Street Railway Company for twenty years, on terms that assure the payment of the interest and sinking-fund charges, so that the city gets this important work practically for nothing. It is also

provided that, when the number of cars daily passing through the subway exceeds a certain number, the city shall receive a toll of five cents for each trip; that is, ten cents each round trip. The lease conveys the right to sub-lease the subway for other purposes, such as the passage of wires, conduits, etc. The company is obliged to maintain the subway and deliver it at the end of the lease in as good condition as when it was received. The lease was made by the Transit Commission with the approval of the Railroad Commission. A lease for so long a period was strongly objected to by many municipal reformers.

**San Francisco.\*—New Charter.** Since the Consolidation Act of 1856 the government of the city and county of San Francisco, has been one until October of last year, when a majority decision of the state supreme court made it dual; transferring to the county, under the General County Government Act, all the offices not expressly reserved to the municipality by the Consolidation Act of '56. This ruling, defining the county clerk, sheriff, superintendent of schools, recorder, public administrator, assessor and coroner to be county officers; and the mayor, board of supervisors, school directors, auditor, tax collector and treasurer to be city officers, was subjected to a good deal of criticism from members of the bar, while to ordinary laymen it was simply bewildering. To them it naturally enough occurred that if there were to be any distinctively county officials, the supervisors would take first place.

The first result of the decision was a state of chaos. The General County Government Act provides that certain officials who have deputies and clerks, are to be paid fixed sums for their departments, out of which they are to pay their assistants. In San Francisco, the county clerk, for instance, has quite an army of deputies and clerks paid out of the city treasury, while his own salary is the same as is paid the heads of other bureau departments. A recent addition to the County Government Act extended the terms of county officials from two years to four years, while in San Francisco we have gone on electing all our bureau officials (excepting assessor) each second year.

When the supreme court took this view it was thought by some that if the county clerk, for instance, was judicially elected for an additional two years under the County Government Act, the other features of the act ought also to apply, and he should pay his army of helpers, or so many of them as he might find actually necessary under such a régime, out of his personal appropriation of \$4000 per year. The confusion which resulted from the decision, rendered

\* Communication of I. T. Milliken, Esq.

about three weeks prior to the November election, served to stimulate advocates of the proposed new charter to be voted upon at that election by the electors of the city and county. It was with a view to making the army of officials at the City Hall workers for instead of against the charter that it was seriously proposed to enjoin payment by the city of the salaries of these deputies and clerks. A succession of rather startling rulings in the last year or two have largely solidified sentiment in favor of some system of municipal government not so much dependent upon supreme court decisions. Discussion of the proposed charter in the last six months had developed some imperfections, a few errors, and some omissions. In spite of all efforts it was defeated at the polls. Probably the most potent factor in its defeat, was a few words in its provisions regarding public schools, as follows:

"The Board of Education shall not appoint any person to be a teacher in the primary or grammar classes of the schools of the city and county except upon competitive examination of those persons holding teachers' certificates, and who have been educated in the public school system of the State of California."

Discussion of this provision was very bitter—the Catholic church very generally claiming unfair discrimination against parochial and other non—"public" schools.

While the vote of the city was nearly 65,000, the total vote upon the charter was less than 34,000 with 2000 more against than for it. This total vote would have been considerably larger but for an unfortunate, though honest mistake in placing the charter at the head of the municipal ticket, but in such position that it was overlooked and taken as part of the caption to the ballot. An astonishingly large number of voters who were friendly to the charter missed their votes in that way, thus illustrating how easy it is to go astray when going into a booth with a ballot having more than 300 items from which to select.

Although the charter was rejected, an amendment to Section 6 of Article XI of the state constitution was adopted by the voters of the state. This section originally read as follows:

"Corporations for municipal purposes shall not be created by special laws, but the legislature by general laws shall provide for the organization, incorporation and classification, in proportion to population of cities and towns, which laws may be altered, amended or repealed. Cities and towns heretofore organized or incorporated may become organized under such general laws whenever a majority of the electors voting at a general election shall so determine, and shall organize in conformity therewith, and cities and towns heretofore or hereafter organized, and all charters thereof framed or adopted by

authority of this constitution shall be subject to and controlled by general laws."

The amendment which was adopted by the voters of the state at the late election, changed this by interpolating after the words "shall be subject" the words *except as to municipal affairs*.

While the amendment was specially framed to prevent the legislature from interfering by general laws, with a charter which might be adopted by the electors of any city, and particularly of the electors of the city and county of San Francisco, it is plain to be seen that the failure of the charter to carry, contemporaneously with the adoption of the amendment and the said ruling of the supreme court, giving us a dual local government, has placed the municipality of San Francisco in an uncertain and in many respects unfortunate position. The amendment does furnish encouragement for another attempt to adopt a new charter. It is probable that the movement will be begun very shortly. A special election seems to be the only means of obtaining a clear expression of opinion on the question.

**Washington.—Returns from Franchises.** A recent communication from the assessor of the District of Columbia shows the return which the city of Washington is receiving from the companies enjoying municipal franchises. In examining the list of payments, it is interesting to note that Washington is one of the few cities receiving a return from telephone and telegraph companies. The payments of the street railway companies cannot be fairly compared with the returns in other cities, owing to the fact that the tax on gross earnings is, in many of the cities, a state tax; the license and other franchise returns being levied in addition by the municipalities. In the District of Columbia, this tax on gross earnings and capital stock is at once a state and local tax. The returns for the year 1896 are as follows:

CORPORATE TITLE.	ASSESSMENT.		Rate of Taxation.	Tax.
	Capital Stock.	Gross Earn'g		
Anacostia & Potomac River Railway Co.	45,905		2 per cent	\$ 918.10
Brightwood Railway Co.	37,746	4	"	1,509.85
Capital Traction Co.	797,092	4	"	31,883.68
Columbia Railway Co.	283,897		\$1.50 per 100	4,258.46
Eckington & Soldiers' Home Railway Co.	111,464	4	per cent	4,458.56
Georgetown & Tennallytown Railw'y Co.	26,109	4	"	1,044.36
Metropolitan Railway Co.	790,620		\$1.50 per 100	11,859.30
Chesapeake & Potomac Telephone Co.	30,000	1.50	"	450.00
Western Union Telegraph Co.	21,000	1.50	"	315.00
Washington Gas Light Co.	1,154,341	1.50	"	17,315.12
Georgetown Gas Light Co.	99,442	1.50	"	1,491.63

Total Payments of Railway, Telegraph and Telephone Companies, \$75,504.06

**Cleveland.\*—*The City Charter.*** Prior to 1891, Cleveland suffered from a total lack of unity or system in the machinery of administration. The legislature, from time to time, at the instance of local politicians or because of the demands of some temporary exigency, had superimposed upon the customary framework commission after commission entrusted with certain specific functions. Some were appointed by the governor, some by the mayor and others were chosen directly by the people. As a consequence, there was an overlapping of duties and functions, a hopeless lack of personal accountability and inability on the part of the public to trace responsibility for shortcomings. In 1887 the evils had grown so flagrant that the Board of Trade took the matter of reform in hand and drafted a charter. At once the enginery of the politicians was set in motion to secure the defeat of the measure, and for some time they were successful. In 1890, through one of those changes in the complexion of politics, so frequent in Ohio, a Democratic legislature was chosen, which at the instance of local politicians, aided by the press and backed up by the Chamber of Commerce and the public sentiment of the city, passed a measure which forms the present political framework of the city.

This is what is known as the "Federal Plan," which was adopted by act of the legislature, March 16, 1891. This measure secures:

1. The enlargement and concentration of responsibility in the mayor, aided by six departments, to wit: Public Works, Police, Fire, Accounts, Law, and Charities and Correction. At the head of each department there is appointed by the mayor, by and with the advice and consent of the council, a director, who serves during the term for which the mayor is elected, *i. e.*, two years. The mayor and heads of the departments constitute the Board of Control, and have exclusive executive power and authority within the city, in their respective departments. They receive liberal salaries and are required to devote their entire time and attention to the city's affairs.

The Board of Control, consisting of the mayor and the heads of the six departments, including the director of law, is the real executive head of the city, and corresponds roughly to the administrative arrangement in vogue in German cities. The Board of Control, in addition to matters germane to its several departments, has general powers of revision of ordinances which are referred to it by the Common Council. It may approve, modify or substitute ordinances, and defend the same on the floor of the council chamber, but its powers are only consultative as its members have no vote in the council chamber. As a matter of fact the mayor has come to be

regarded as the central figure of the system. Being entitled to a seat with his directors, in the weekly meetings of the council, he is able generally, by the judicial distribution of patronage and other means, to so influence legislation as to practically formulate and execute any policy which he desires.

The legislative department of the city is single chambered. It consists of twenty-two members, elected by districts, who serve for the term of two years, one member from each district being chosen each year. Municipal elections are held in the spring and are wholly separated from state and national elections which occur in the fall. By this means the issues are clearly raised and spirited contests usually result. The mayor enjoys the right of veto over all legislation, subject to the passage of the same over his veto by a two-thirds vote.

Despite the improvement which has come about since the adoption of the new charter, it is manifest that city government is a problem of men, not of system. Hardly had the system been put into operation when it became an object of suspicion. Drafted with the idea of obtaining relief from outgrown commissions, it was soon seen that it failed to offer all that was expected of it. Refuge was again sought in the voluntary citizens' commission, and the Sinking Fund and Park Commissions have since been created and filled with citizens of irreproachable character and devoted to the public interest. Under the Park Commission, Cleveland is developing a magnificent park and boulevard system, and the city has been enriched by gifts which give the city a continuous park system in the east end.

While charges of wholesale corruption have not been made against officials and while a higher grade of officials have been chosen than in many of our municipalities, there has been a growing restlessness for several years because of the dominion of politicians, ring contractors, dishonest franchise granting and the spoils system. This spirit developed into the Civic Federation in 1894, which endorsed candidates in the spring election of 1895, was unsuccessful and has since ceased to exist. Nothing by way of voluntary association was done from then until December last, when there was organized among the business men of the city an organization known as the Municipal Association, whose objects as set out in the constitution are as follows, to wit:

"To disseminate instructive information relative to the government of the city of Cleveland; to devise and advocate plans for its improvement; to promote business-like, honest and efficient conduct in municipal affairs; to promote the choice of competent officials; to encourage faithful performance of public duty; to secure the enactment and enforcement of laws for the economical, intelligent and progressive management of the affairs of the city government."

The association is open to all citizens or taxpayers, and the membership fee is \$1.00. It does not aim to be representative of wards or

districts. It is governed by a general committee of fifty chosen by ballot from all the members of the association, and more directly by an executive committee of ten. It has a paid secretary, commodious meeting rooms in the central part of the city, and in the coming spring election proposes to disseminate information through the press and its own publications relative to the character and qualifications of candidates for office. Efforts are being made with considerable success to enlist the co-operation of the working classes and to bring before the attention of the people the necessity of civil service reform. The city has suffered greatly from the spoils system, and the various allied societies of the city contemplate a vigorous campaign before the next legislature to secure the passage of a civil service law based on the merit system.

An examination of the Departments of Public Works, Charities and Correction and Police shows the extent to which the power of removal of employes in these departments during the year 1895 has been exercised. From this it appears that out of a total of 468 persons whom the directors had unrestricted power to remove all but 110, more than three-fourths, were removed that year from the city service.

The coming spring campaign is of special importance to the city from the fact that the incoming administration will probably be called upon to grant a franchise to the combined street railway systems of the city under the so-called Rogers Law, which provides for an extension of existing franchises for fifty years on terms of universal transfer. The statute further provides for a reappraisal of the value of the franchise at the end of twenty years and each fifteen years thereafter. Candidates are being asked to express themselves as to their position upon the railway question, and certain ward Republican organizations have pledged their candidates to accede to no terms less than four cent fares and 25 per cent of the gross receipts, while several Democratic candidates have announced themselves in favor of municipal ownership of the entire system. This promises to be the prominent issue in the campaign, as the labor organizations have quite uniformly arrayed themselves on the side of municipal ownership. As they form a large and uncertain voting element, they are likely to play an important part in the campaign.

*The City's Gas Charter.*—Since 1891 the city has been relieved from recurring charges of corruption relative to deals between the city officials and the two gas companies in the city. At that time the city council undertook to reduce the price of gas to consumers to sixty cents per 1000. The matter was carried to the courts, who held that the city possessed the right to regulate charges for gas, but that such regulation must be reasonable. As a result of the controversy the

gas companies proposed by way of settlement, that for ten years the price of gas be eighty cents per thousand cubic feet, that the companies pay six and one-half per cent of the gross receipts from sales of gas into the city treasury. It was further provided that the companies make sworn statements every six months as to their receipts, and keep proper books showing in detail the quantity of coal and other material consumed, number of cubic feet of gas manufactured, number of meters in use. The books were to be open to the city auditor, and the city was authorized to appoint at any time a competent person to make a thorough investigation of the books. The gas must be of merchantable quality of not less than eighteen candle power, to be determined by monthly average of semi-weekly tests.

The companies also agreed to assume all of the court costs arising from litigation.

Since the passage of this ordinance, the city has enjoyed excellent gas service; the corporations have been able to declare regular six per cent dividends, and the public press has been free from the recurring charges of bribery and corruption so prevalent during the preceding years when the gas company was the favored object of assault. During the three years extending from 1893 to 1895 the receipts to the city from the six and one-half per cent payment of gross receipts has been as follows:

1893 . . . . .	\$42,113.00
1894 . . . . .	45,044.48
1895 . . . . .	50,445.96
Total . . . . .	\$137,603.44

**Buffalo.\*—Good Government Clubs.** Last winter the constitution of the Council of Confederated Good Government Clubs, of Buffalo, was amended so as to extend its sphere of activity to matters affecting the county of Erie as well as the city of Buffalo. The reason for this extension was that many of the county institutions, such as the almshouse, penitentiary and jail, are located in Buffalo, and there was reason to believe that great laxity, if not corruption, prevailed in their management. A committee of fifteen was appointed to investigate the management of the almshouse in particular, and their studies were quietly continued during the summer. The first results of the investigation have just been made public through an investigation held by the Police Court of Buffalo, upon information made and sworn to by a member of this committee, which alleged fraud, grand larceny and perjury on the part of eight members of the Board of Supervisors. The supervisors concerned have been arrested and held to bail for the action of the grand jury. The counsel of the Good Government

\*Communication of A. C. Richardson, Esq.

Clubs assert that this is only the beginning, and that much more interesting facts will soon be brought to light. These discoveries are regarded as extremely opportune, for the election next fall will be exclusively municipal—the first of the kind since the new state constitution took effect. It is connected with county affairs, however, by the choice of a supervisor for each ward of the city. The Good Government Clubs took no part whatever in the last election, as no municipal issues were involved, but their great opportunity is at hand. Their organization has been maintained, and it will probably lead to better nominations on both sides than usual.

*Public Schools.* A bill has been introduced into the legislature abolishing the "annual contract" system for teachers in the public schools. If it becomes law, all appointments hereafter will be of indefinite duration, and the removal of a teacher will be a positive act on the part of the superintendent, for which he must place reasons on file in his office. He will no longer be able to remove good teachers by simply omitting to renew their contracts, as heretofore, nor to retain poor or unfit ones under the excuse of a contract. The teachers, moreover, will be relieved of the annual uncertainty about the retention of their positions, which naturally causes great anxiety toward the close of the school year.

#### FOREIGN CITIES.

**English Cities.—Municipal Legislation.** With each succeeding year legislation for cities is demanding the attention of the committee of Parliament to an increasing extent. Were it not for the system of private bill legislation, under which the greater part of such bills are classed, little time would remain for the more general public work of Parliament.

In a recent summary of such legislation now before Parliament,\* the great diversity of interests involved is clearly shown. It illustrates at the same time the rapidity of the extension of municipal functions throughout England. At the present time, the movement toward municipalization of tramways is especially noticeable. The success of Glasgow, Huddersfield, and the more recent experience of Sheffield in direct municipal operation, and the likewise favorable results obtained by Manchester, Birmingham, Leeds and Bradford, where a combination of municipal ownership of the lines and rental of operation has been adopted, have acted as an incentive to other cities. Liverpool, Manchester, Southampton, Swansea, Birkenhead, Leicester, York and Nottingham have applied for power to operate

\* London, January 21, 1897, p. 33.

directly the street railway system of their respective districts. Bradford, Halifax, Blackpool, Leeds, Bolton, Morecambe, Sheffield, Salford, Moss Side, Newport, Rathmines and Reading have applied for power to make extensions, and to change the motive power to electricity.

A great number of bills asking for power to establish a system of municipal electric lighting have been introduced. Some twenty-five municipalities are anxious to establish municipal electric light plants. Again, five municipalities have signified their intention to take advantage of the municipal lodging-house provisions of the Housing of the Working Classes Act. Model dwelling houses are to be constructed in a large number of cities, the present plan of Edinburgh being probably the largest of the series.

*Glasgow.—Street Railway System.* A report recently presented by a sub-committee of the Tramways Committee, presents a description of street railway traction and operation in the leading American cities. Before deciding upon the change of motor power from horse to cable or electrical traction, the Town Council empowered the Tramways Committee to send a delegation to the leading cities of the continent and to the United States, to examine into the street railway systems of the larger cities. Early in 1896 an elaborate report on the street railway systems of continental cities was presented; the present report represents the results of the committee's investigations in the United States. The experience with the different systems of traction is examined with great care. In its conclusions the committee decides in favor of the overhead electric system. As a result of such a change, 50 per cent could be added to the time-table speed, with a reduction of at least 15 per cent in cost of operation. Examining this question from the point of view of the needs of the city, the necessity for a system of rapid transit is conceded without dissent. Historical causes, combined with the undeveloped condition of railway communication, have led to a congested condition of all the larger cities of England and Scotland; this is especially true of Glasgow, where, in some parts, the density of population is greater than in any of the continental cities. The city has been expending large sums in clearing these unhealthy areas. The high price of the property thus cleared makes it impossible to construct thereon dwellings suitable for the laboring classes; as a result, the displaced population tends to overcrowd adjacent central districts. One of the first effects of an improved system of communication with one, two and three cent fares, will be to spread this population in the suburban districts, especially if the municipality adopts the policy now in contemplation of building laborers' dwellings in these outlying districts.

**Birmingham.**—*Housing of the Working Classes.* The activity of English municipalities under the Housing of the Working Classes Act continues with unabated vigor. Additional powers are being continually asked for from Parliament. During the year 1897, the city of Birmingham proposes to carry out a large scheme for the extension of the municipal model-dwelling system. Recently a series of tenements containing 103 dwellings has been completed. The one great difficulty with which all municipalities have had to contend, has been to provide sanitary tenements for the lower class of unskilled laborers, the class unwilling to expend more than three or four shillings a week in rental. For this class the city has, as yet, done nothing. A recent decision of the council has brought the municipality face to face with this problem. Dwellings arranged on the tenement plan, containing two bedrooms, a living room and a scullery, are to be erected at a cost of over \$30,000. The rentals are to range from 3*s. 9d.* to 4*s. 3d.* per week. The council proposes to begin on this small scale as an experiment, to be extended if successful. It is to be noted that in dwellings of this character, most of the English cities have abandoned the idea of obtaining anything like the ordinary rate of interest on the investment. For instance, in this particular case the site is not included in the capitalization upon which return is expected.